



SENATOR

Mary Margaret Haugen

E-Newsletter - 10th District

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10th Legislative District

March 20, 2009

IMPORTANT REMINDER - TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Please join me and other members of our community at one of the two town hall meetings I will be hosting tomorrow (March 21).

The first event will begin at 10 a.m. in the Stanwood Middle School Cafeteria at [9405 271st Street NW](#).

An afternoon event will begin at 2 p.m. in the Coupeville Recreation Hall at [901 N. Alexander Street](#).

During these meetings I'll give a brief rundown of locally important bills moving through the Legislature and an overview of the state budget situation. That will be followed by a question-and-answer session during which I hope to get valuable feedback to consider during the remainder of the 2009 Session.

I hope I will see you there!

2009 LEGISLATURE — WEEK TEN

Operating budget shortfall grows to \$9 billion

The state's Revenue Forecast Council released a [new projection](#) of tax collections this week that cut the state's budget hole even wider.

With the national economy continuing to sour, the Council projects tax collections will drop by \$552 million over the next 28 months. Weak housing and auto sales have spread to other segments of our economy such as manufacturing, aerospace, software publishing, and retail sales.

Data suggest economic growth will remain stagnant in the first six months of 2010 and could improve in the second half of the year. Unfortunately, job losses are expected to continue even after our economy recovers.

Washington's [unemployment rate jumped](#) to 8.4 percent in February, up from 7.8 percent in January. An estimated 330,572 people in our state are now out of work. In February our state lost 28,200 non-agricultural jobs. Professional and business service sector is down 13,400 jobs, the construction industry is down 4,200 jobs and manufacturing has cut 2,500 jobs.

All this has pushed the state's unprecedented budget shortfall to about \$9 billion. Senate leaders believe this will force them to accept many of the cuts Gov. Chris Gregoire proposed in her budget plan and then cut more than 60 percent deeper.

This will force lawmakers to cut budgets directly into the bone of core state services. Virtually every functional area of the budget that can legally be cut will be. That includes major cuts in education and higher education, health care and services for the vulnerable.

The revenue forecast is the last major piece to the budget puzzle lawmakers need to craft their own proposals. The Senate's version could be announced as soon as next week. The House is expected to release its plan shortly thereafter.

You can watch a video of Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman [Margarita Prentice](#), D-Renton, discussing the budget situation [here](#). Committee vice-chair [Rodney Tom](#), D-Medina, held a press conference with reporters after this week's revenue forecast and you can [watch the exchange here](#).

WASHINGTON'S TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Next week, I will lead the Senate in unveiling a transportation budget (which is separate from the operating budget) that focuses on projects that enhance the safety and efficiency of our state highway system and includes directives that improve accountability within the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Washington State Ferries (WSF).

Although we face a serious shortfall of revenue, the Senate is committed to improving transportation using dedicated revenue sources like gas taxes and federal funds that are constitutionally restricted from being used in the operating budget.

Washington is already on track to begin \$4.1 billion in highway construction and preservation projects during the next two years, and the transportation budget that will be announced next week will continue those priorities.

The Washington State Department of Transportation has a complete list of state highway transportation projects [here](#).



A VISIT FROM MR. YUK!

This week is National Poison Prevention Week, which means my office got a special visit from Mr. Yuk and this year's statewide poster winner Ivyanne Smith!

Mr. Yuk is the "spokesperson" who works to help promote organizations like the [Washington Poison Center \(WAPC\)](#), which is our state's provider of immediate, free and expert treatment advice and assistance on the telephone in the case of exposure to poisonous, hazardous or toxic substances.

According to the Washington State Department of Health, every \$1 spent on a poison center saves \$175 in overall healthcare cost.

According to the most recently available data (Dec.2000), we save an

estimated \$10.5 million in avoided hospitalizations a year thanks to the efforts of WAPC and the hard work of Mr. Yuk!

If you have questions about poisons, you can call a Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. When you call this number, you talk to specially trained nurses, pharmacists, and doctors. All are there to provide emergency treatment advice for all kinds of poison exposures, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They also answer questions about poison prevention, and how to poison proof your home. **All services are free and confidential.**

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

My executive assistant Nova Gattman, legislative assistant Gina Bull and intern Beau Perschbacher are available to provide constituent services to the people of our community, so please feel free to contact us with questions or concerns — whether they involve bills before the Legislature or topics you feel are being overlooked.

You can reach me by [e-mail](#) or call my office in Olympia at **360-786-7618**. If you have a concern, I want to hear it.

In the meantime, please visit my [web page](#) for up-to-date info on what's happening at the Legislature. I post regular updates — including video — onto my blog, and it's far more information than we'd want to put in a weekly update like this.

Until next week — Take Care!

Thank you for reading my email newsletter. I appreciate your interest in the legislative process. If at any time you decide you no longer wish to receive updates from me, please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/subscriptions/member.aspx?member=haugenm> to remove your name from the list.

Washington Senate Democratic Caucus